

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

Election and Saving Faith

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Now, as we come back to the book of Ephesians verse-by-verse, we have a central question that has even come up in my opportunities in private interactions with many of you in following our exposition of the first 12 verses of Ephesians chapter 1. We have walked through the various principles of the sovereignty of God in salvation that are found in Ephesians chapter 1, and we're not going to rehearse any of those issues, but we've been dealing with difficult issues systematically, one-by-one, to make it as plain and clear as we possibly can with human language. And today, we come to another crucial issue that affects every single one of us and is of particular importance to you young people. Those of you that have grown up in Christian homes and perhaps have never heard anything other than the Gospel, we have in front of us today a most significant issue that will kind of conclude our consideration of the doctrine of election.

And the question is this, I'm going to put it in two different ways for you this morning to just kind of help you see where we're going. First of all, to say it theologically, what is the relationship between election and saving faith? If God has chosen those who would be saved, where does the role of my saving faith come into the equation? We're going to look at that today from the text of Ephesians. Stated differently, you can ask the question this way: What must I do to be saved? What do I do if God has already chosen the elect? How is there any part for me, and if there is a part for me, what do I do? What do I do? If that's your question this morning, and in one sense it's your question because it's my question that I'm going to try to answer from the pulpit today, so it's everybody's question this morning, but if that's the question that's on your heart, let me tell you that you're in good company. In fact, I would go so far to say that until a person starts to ask that question with a sense of urgency they have never understood the doctrines of grace and salvation. They have never understood the construction, the importance, of teaching that God has chosen who would be saved, and His will will most certainly be accomplished. When you start to understand the things that we've looked at over the past few weeks, it forces a question to the top of your soul. What then must I do to be saved?

And someone who has never seriously wrestled with that question has great reason to question whether they're saved at all. I don't care what home you were born into. I don't care how long you've thought you've been a Christian. Unless that question has sometime

somehow weighed on your mind as the most singular important question in the course of the universe, in the course of your human life, you have reason to question whether you've understood the Gospel at all, because when you start to understand the weight of the issues, the significance of the things that are at stake and what the Bible says about salvation, you start to realize that nothing else matters by comparison. It doesn't matter what's happening in the course of world events. It doesn't matter what's happening on the political scene. The things of our personal lives are secondary to this one major primary question, because you start to understand that there is eternity at stake and the things of this world are going to pass away. And you start to see things when the eternal perspective of salvation is brought to bear on your mind, and you understand it, the things of this world start to grow strangely dim, because you realize that there is something of transcendent importance at stake in what the Bible says about salvation that makes everything else secondary by comparison. If my soul is right with God, if my sins are forgiven, and I am going to heaven for all of eternity, then everything else on this earth is secondary to that. It's just like the hymn says, "It's well with my soul." Then everything else is secondary by comparison. And that gives you a perspective to filter through the endless screaming headlines on the news, in magazines, and everything else that we access information about the world around us. It gives you a perspective to say, "This is not the most important thing in my life." You need to understand and see it that way.

Now, if by contrast, and look, I know that there are some of you like this in here. I'm not going to play games with you. The fact that we love each other, that we're friends, and that almost all of us see each other in one manner or another week-by-week does not discharge my duty to tell you that there are some of you who are in eternal danger. And you view the Christian faith, you view the teaching of the Bible as one thing among many other things that are important to you. Christ is one among others to you rather than the supreme and final object of your affections, the one to whom, alone, your final allegiance lies. And if you just see Jesus in the mix of your life rather than as the pinnacle of your life, you're really missing it. And I don't care how long you've been under Bible teaching during Truth Community's existence and prior to, until your heart affection is so wrapped up in Christ and Christ alone, you have reason to question whether you're truly saved or not. It's just that simple. It's just that plain. Jesus came as Lord. He didn't come as secondary to your earthly pursuits, your career, your relationships, any that other stuff. And look, I'm saying this not because I'm upset with you. I'm not upset with anybody. This just has to be clear, because it's too important to miss it.

What do I do then? That's the central question. If that question rises up in your soul, then take heart and find the answer. Listen as I give you the answer here today. This is the most important question of them all. What do I do? If that's your question, then you're in good company here today. That's the way that you should be responding to the teaching of God's Word. In response to the preaching of John the Baptist, the crowds in Luke chapter 3 cried out and said, "What shall we do?" John came preaching repentance, and they said, "What shall we do?" In response to the preaching of Peter at Pentecost, the Jews in Acts chapter 2 said, "What shall we do?" And in response to the Apostle Paul, the Philippian jailer in acts 16 said, "What must I do?" Apparently, there's something central to that question. When John the Baptist preached the people said, "What do I do?" When

Peter preached the Jews said, "What do I do? What do we do?" Paul and Silas being whipped and beaten in jail, and a great earthquake occurs, and the Philippian jailer who had heard them all that time came running in falling down saying, "What must I do?"

Look, there is a humbling of the soul in that question, and I invite you, I encourage you, I exhort you, I ask you, I beg you to ask yourself whether the Gospel has ever become that urgent in your mind. Where you, as it were, fall down before the Word of God and say, "What must I do to be saved?" Has it ever been so urgent to you? Listen to this, implied in that question is a sense that, "I am helpless. I don't know what to do. I need help from outside of me to respond to this salvation. What do I do?" Look, let me just be real honest with what I'm doing here right now: I am blasting cannons at your pride. The pride that says, "I know. I'm okay. I've known this since birth." That's not okay. At some point, true repentance, true saving faith brings you to the point where you say, "What must I do? I am so humbled under the supreme righteousness of the Law of God that I have violated. I'm so humbled in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm so unsure of my own condition. I feel so much the weight of my own sin, but all I can do is ask a human messenger, 'what is it that I must do in order to be saved?'" A person who has never been desperate, a person who has never said, "I am bankrupt!" A person who has never said, "I am famished." A person who has never said, "I am so thirsty before the call of God. Help me! What do I do?" Unless, somehow, that has echoed and reverberated in your heart to that level of urgency where it becomes the only question that matters to you, you need to examine yourself and see if you're in the faith. What else can I say? Because the pattern in Scripture is that when people hear the Gospel, and they understand it, they're left with the question, "What must I do?"

And so, for those of you that have asked that question and have interacted with me or some of the other elders about that, "Good on ya, mate," in honor of our Australian friends that are here. "Good on ya, mate." This is the question that you need to be asking. This is the question that should be coming to your mind. And the answer is this: there is something for you to do. There is something most urgent for you to do, but let's be really clear about what it is. It is not a prayer that you can pray that will lock up the day for you. This is not something that you do on a one-off thing, and then say, "Okay, can I go play now?" No, it's too urgent. It's too important for that. If God's at work in a heart it's going to be more urgent than treating it as if, "Well, do I have the hamburger or the hotdog to eat tonight? Do I go to heaven or do I go to, oooh, I might as well go to heaven. Now, can we have the hamburger?" You just can't deal with it that superficially. You can't respond to that with such trifles. That's right, trifles! Not in response to the Gospel of the eternal salvation brought to you by the eternal Son of God that has eternal consequences for your eternal soul. How could it possibly be that we would trifle with a five second prayer and think that that's settled eternity, and then go on with an unchanged life. What a mockery of Scripture that is. It's far more profound than that.

What must I do to be saved? It's not a work that you can do to earn your salvation. It doesn't come to you because of something you did as a kid, and then you were just a good little boy the rest of the way along. It's not that. It's not that. In summary, I'm going to make a little summary statement here, and then we're going to unpack it in the rest of our

time together. What must you do to be saved? You must make a heart commitment to Christ, if you would be saved. You must make a commitment from the very depth of your soul with every fiber of your being with the totality of every single one of your affections that, "I bring it all to You, Lord Jesus. I deny myself. I bring it all to You, and I lay it at Your feet in response to the work that You have done." There must be a heart commitment. And when I say heart commitment, hear both words. From your heart! From the depths of your mind, your emotions, and your volition. From your will. From the totality of the center of your being, "Oh, Christ, I belong to You!" And a commitment. Not simply, "Let me get this prayer out of the way," but a commitment that says this, "Now, Lord Jesus, You now own all of my life energy. Everything belongs to you. I irrevocably turn my back on who I am, and what I used to be, and on my sin, and I come alone, and I come empty-handed to the cross of Christ and that risen Lord Jesus."

You see, the question is: have you responded to Christ like that, and has your life shown the marks of a growing understanding, of growing heart affections, of growing obedience, of growing in knowledge? Has something like that happened in your life? Now look: what must I do to be saved? We've been talking about the work of God and the sovereignty of God in salvation. Let's be real clear on something. Something that we're all responsible for, and it's this: God does not believe in Christ for you. God will not believe in Christ for you. To express it theologically, election does not negate human responsibility. To express it on a more personal level, the Gospel is a command upon your will. It is an invitation to your heart to which you must respond if you are to be saved. Those who believe in Christ enter into salvation. Those who refuse, face eternal judgment, and it's not because God failed to do anything for you. It's because you heard and you refused to believe. You heard and you treated it superficially. You heard and you didn't care. The responsibility for this is on you to respond.

Jesus said, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." Right now, He commands through His Word to you who are not saved, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." Will you do that? To the extent that you say, "No," you're signing your own eternal death decree. He commands you, "Repent and believe." He invites you as a loving, gracious Savior, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest. Come! Drink of the water that I'll give you, and living waters will come out of the innermost part of your soul," as He said to the Samaritan woman in John 4. He commands. He invites you. Will you accept His invitation? If you say, "No." That's not God speaking, is it? That's you speaking, saying, "No," to it. Maybe you're a little bit like I used to be, and while outwardly you would profess to make some kind of acknowledgment that you were a sinner, inside you treasured the fact that you were a little bit better than everybody else. You treasured the fact that you hadn't committed the sins that those people had. You treasured the fact that you had always been a good boy, a good girl, and there's that little circle of pride that you wouldn't let out to anybody, because you know that you're not supposed to do that. That wouldn't be a good boy to do that, or a good girl to do that. But inside, there's this cherished thought that, "I'm a pretty good person." Look, if you look in the mirror and say, "I'm a pretty good person," the next thought that should connect in your mind is that, "I'm not a Christian." If that's what you think about yourself, "I'm a good person, better than those around me," you're not a Christian, because you've never been broken by the

reality of your sin and guilt. A Christian is someone who has settled once and for all, "I'm not a good person. I'm a sinner, guilty before God, and I needed Him to save me." You see, soldiers fight with military weapons. All a Gospel preacher can do is bring the Word of God to bear upon your heart and conscience. Ultimately, you must respond.

Our passage this morning points us in the right direction and helps us see what the content of that response is. It helps us understand that there is something for us to do and it's in Ephesians 1:13 to 14. After this message this week, we'll move on into the work of the Spirit in verses 13 and 14. This is our final message talking about some of the ramifications of the doctrine of election, but look at verse 13 where it says, "In Him," that is in Christ, "you also, after listening to the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation." That's what we talked about last time. How evangelism fits into this. How the people of God bring the Word of God to those who are separated from God. Now, in an almost parenthetical way, Paul explains what it is that the human response is. He says, "This is what you have done. You having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." And that phrase there "having also believed" is what we want to focus on here for the rest of our time this morning. Having also believed. It's such a brief statement, and yet, even in the context of this passage, it's the hinge on which the door to heaven turns, you can rightfully say. From verses 3 to 12 and into the beginning half of verse 13, Paul has been talking about the work of God, the sovereignty of God in salvation, and we've expounded that at length. Now, jump over that phrase, "having also believed." He says that "You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory." God had done His sovereign work, made His sovereign plans. Now, you are sealed in the Spirit. How did it get from there, from God's plan, to the work of the Spirit sealed in your heart? That little phrase, "having also believed," is the hinge and shows us what it is that we must do in order to be saved.

It's exceedingly important. "Having also believed." It's surprising to me as I read commentators on this passage. It's surprising how little attention the commentators pay to that phrase, but it's critical. Maybe part of it is just the fact that commentators are trying to accomplish a slightly different goal. I don't know. As a pastor, a pastor wants everyone to understand this aspect of it. And so, a pastor parks it here for the sake of the souls that listen. The souls that hear. "You must believe." What's interesting about this verse and passages, right there in verse 13, he doesn't say what it was they believed, does he? He just says, "having also believed." Believe what? How am I supposed to understand what to believe, if you just say, "having also believed" and you move right on to something else? Well, look: let's talk about an important principle of understanding the Bible here. When it seems like something is really important, but you don't find it right in the verse that you're looking at, look at the context. Let the context explain and help you understand what it is that you are supposed to be seeing. And in this book of Ephesians, which we're almost exclusively going to stay in, you're going to be able to find the content of what you should believe and what the commitment is of saving faith. That's what we're going to look at.

What must you do? You must believe in order to be saved. You must make a heart commitment to Christ. What does that look like? That's what we're going to talk about. Two aspects of it here this morning, and I ask you to listen carefully. First of all, what we want to see is the content of saving faith. That's point number 1, if you're taking notes here this morning. The content of saving faith. Paul says in verse 13 that they had believed. "Having also believed." He's looking back at the past in the life and the experience of his readers. He says, "You had believed. You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." It was something that had happened in the past in their lives and had ongoing results. It's not a Greek perfect tense, but that's not the point. So, the question is: what was it they believed? What must I believe in order to be saved? What's the content? What am I to understand and respond to? The question is: where can I find that in Ephesians chapter 1, so that I can understand?

Well, let's look at it. Let's look at a little carefully here. I'm going to take my glasses off so I can see my copy of the Scriptures more clearly. Look at verse 13 with me again now as we're really going to train our eyes on the text here. Verse 13, Paul says, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having also believed," you believed in Him. Okay? Now, let's not be superficial. Let's not be too quick about saying what that means, because "Him" is a pronoun, and the question is, what's the antecedent to that pronoun? Who is "Him" referring to? And what has been said about this "Him" that led up to verse 13? Well, watch this. Watch this and realize that we're just going to start at verse 5 and make our way down to verse 13 to set the context for what Paul meant when he said that "you had believed." In verse 5 Paul says that, "God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." There it is. To Jesus Christ. Okay? Now, watch what happens as this passage unfolds. Paul starts to use pronouns to refer back to Christ, and, as he's using each pronoun, he's discussing a different aspect of the work of Christ. And so, he says there in verse 6 that, "God freely bestowed on us grace in the beloved." Verse 7, "In Him," that is in the Beloved, which is referring to Christ. "In Him we have redemption through His blood." Verse 10, in Christ, "things in the heavens and things on the earth are summed up in him." Verse 11, "we have obtained an inheritance." Verse 12, it's "in Christ that we would be to the praise of His glory." Verse 13, "In Him also, having believed." Now, we're going to go back over this in just a moment, but all I wanted you to see there is that there is this string like spiral strands of DNA that connect these earlier verses to what it means to believe in Christ. And that's what we're going to take a look at. Verse 13. "Having also believed" stands on the shoulders of all of the other verses that led up to it. And so, when Paul says in chapter 1 verse 13 "Having believed," he means this: he means that they had believed in the sovereign redemptive work of Christ. They had believed what Paul had just described in the preceding verses. They had embraced that. They had received that. He was telling them things in Ephesians chapter 1 that they had already heard and believed in. And so, he's reciting that which they had previously believed in as he leads up to that statement in verse 13.

Now stay with me here. Question is, what must you do to be saved? What is the content of saving faith that we can learn from the context of this passage? First of all, I'm going to give you three sub points here. Content of saving faith, first of all. Write this down:

take responsibility for your guilt. Take responsibility for your guilt. You have violated God's Law. You are not righteous in His sight. This is true even of you young people. If you're old enough to understand my words, you're old enough to understand that you've been naughty, you've been disobedient, and there are consequences to that. You have violated God's Law, even you young people. You say, "Where do you see that?" Look at verse 7. Chapter 1 verse 7. Paul says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood." You see it there? Does everybody have their finger on the text there? "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of," there it is, "our trespasses." Trespasses means that you have broken God's Law. You have disobeyed Him. God holds you responsible for your sin. You won't get away with it.

And let me say this. There are so many things I want to say, but it boils down to this: when we say the content of saving faith means that you take responsibility for your guilt, it means that you understand that we're not talking about the fact that people in general are bad. We're not saying that you're guilty because the head of the human race, Adam, sinned and was guilty. It's more to it than that. Adam fell into sin. That's true. We bear the consequences of that. We inherited a sinful nature as a result of that, but that's not what we're talking about here. What we're talking about here is that you, by name, put your name in the blank. I won't call anyone out by name from the pulpit on a point like this. That's not appropriate. You put your name right there. You are the one who is responsible for your guilt. You are guilty. You should be saying to yourself, "I am guilty." God holds you responsible for your sin. And when Paul says, "Our trespasses," notice the possessive first-person pronoun that he uses. They're ours. It's yours and mine. We have trespassed the Law of God. We have crossed boundaries that He said not to cross. We have not done what He has commanded us to do. Every one of us in this room is in that same boat. We are all together leveled under the condemnation of the Law of God. And it's not just a corporate thing. It is you individually are guilty, and until you own up to that, salvation is excluded from you. Jesus said, "I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He's talking about the way they view themselves. If you think there's a kernel of good in you, forget it. That's not the one that Jesus came to call. It's a broken sinner that says, "I'm guilty. I'm the one to blame. I don't blame anyone else. Lord, it was me that chose that. It's me that refused that. God, it's my guilt and my guilt alone that condemns me before You, nothing that anyone else did, either in history or around me in time."

Look at Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 where you can see Paul emphasizing this as well. Notice, the possessive pronouns. Chapter 2 verse 1. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." Do you have in your mind a settled disposition, a settled conclusion that accepts the responsibility for your guilt of breaking God's Law? That's an inherent component of real true saving faith. We don't come to Christ because we want a better marriage. We don't come to Christ because we want a happier life here on earth. You want a happy life? Go to Disneyland, or go to Disney World. That's on this side of the Mississippi, right? I still have those echoes of the West coast in my mind. It's not about your happiness. It's about your guilt. It's about recognizing that, "There is something warped and wrong and sinful and distorted about me that does not love and obey God like I should. I lie. I lust. I steal. I misrepresent things. I'm a hypocrite. I pretend to be a

Christian when I'm not, just so people around me will think the right thing. I harbor thoughts that I'm good enough for God apart from the absolute saving work of Christ." You take responsibility, because all of that is blameworthy. It's guilty. It's wrong. It's sinful. It's a trespass against the holy Word of God.

You see, your sin is not just something external that you do, and if you've kept your life pretty clean externally that you're okay. God had to convince me of that before I could be saved. That's not it. It makes no difference whatsoever if someone looks at you and thinks you're a pretty good person. That's irrelevant. God doesn't see as man sees. God looks at the heart. I don't know how else to say it; how many different ways to say it. If you would be a Christian, what you must do is you must come to grips with the guilt of your own soul. And the person that has truly understood the guilt of his own soul is shattered by it. It troubles him. He can't get beyond that, in a sense, certainly not on his own. Let me say it this way. You see, I'm trying to say it 10,000 different ways in the hopes that one of them will connect with those of you that are still resistant. You look at it, and you say, "This is my responsibility." And you own up to it. You're done with excuses. You're done with putting makeup on your soul. You strip it all away, and you go to God, "I'm a sinner in need of mercy." Not, "I'm a pretty good person that deserves Your favor." Saving faith acknowledges explicitly, "I don't deserve anything from You God. I appeal to nothing inside myself to ask You to be kind and good to me. I appeal to You in Christ alone, because it's not that everybody else has sinned, Lord. It's that I have, and I'm not going to run away from it anymore. I'm not going to deny, I'm not going to pretend that it doesn't matter. I'm not going to cover it up. Lord, my soul is open to You, and the guilt is there, and I have no excuse."

You see, when we take people through a two-minute Gospel presentation that simply says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Now let's move on to something else." We're really not giving that the proper level of time and attention that the Bible gives to make that settle in on someone's soul. You see, it's more than just mentally acknowledging that, a check box. "Oh, yeah, okay, I've sinned. Big deal. What's next?" No, that's not it at all. No. No. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit stops you in your tracks, and you say, "No, wait! Wait, wait. Yeah, I have sinned. But no! I have sinned! This is a showstopper! This stops me in my tracks! Life can't go on like it has. I'm guilty before a holy God. Oh, what must I do to be saved?" It's not incidental. It's not that you made a couple of mistakes. That you had one or two bad thoughts. Take responsibility for your guilt. If your heart doesn't resonate with what I've been saying, your first prayer to God is, "God, I must be missing it. I don't know anything about this showstopper stuff that he's talking about. Either he's nuts, or I am." It's not me, just so you know. It's not me. It's you, on this point. If the idea of sin has never stopped you in your tracks and made you completely reevaluate life, you have real reason to question whether you've ever understood what it means to be Christian. It's not a casual acknowledgment. It's not, "Yeah, you know, back then." There comes a point where someone who truly understands the reality of sin in his heart and the guilt on his soul, you want to disassociate yourself from your past. As Christ said, "You deny yourself," because you want to be as far away from the guilt of that old man as you possibly can be. I reject my old man. I reject the old Don Green." I've said it many times and I'll say it

again: if the old Don Green walked through that door, I would stop the service, find a ball bat, and beat him to death. I hate him that much. Now, he's never going to come back. All I'm trying to do in 10,500 different ways is to give you a sense of what it means to take responsibility for your guilt, saying one thing a lot of different ways, hoping that something connects, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit that something connects. Take responsibility for your guilt. That's what you must do. It's me.

Now, having done that, where do we go next? Well, let me say it this way. Secondly, you've taken responsibility for your guilt. You want to be saved. What must you do to be saved? You take responsibility for your guilt. Well, secondly, second sub point here in the content of saving faith: you tremble at your separation from God. You tremble at your separation from God. We won't turn there, but Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Here's another way to evaluate whether you've gotten it about salvation or not. Do you know something about the fear of God? Do you realize that His holiness is a threat to your well-being? Have you ever understood that your guilt puts you in a position of condemnation and judgment that is a threat to you, that has a sense of impending harm and doom upon you? Have you ever understood it that way? Have you ever feared God as someone who could bring harm to you because of your guilt? Or are you just kind of, "Okay. Whatever." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." A sinner who understands something about the holiness of God and the way that he has violated, trembles and quakes and shakes in his boots at the reality of it. Remember Isaiah 6. "Lord, woe is me! I'm a man of sinful lips, and I live among a people of sinful lips. Woe is me! I am undone!"

Your guilt separates you from God, and Paul expands on this later in the epistle. Look at chapter 2 verse 3. You see, we need the Spirit of God to shake us out of our complacency to realize that eternal matters are at stake when the Word of God is opened. Chapter 2 verse 3. "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh." Notice the possessive pronoun again, first person, "our flesh." "Indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." "Whoa! God's wrath is upon the guilt of my trespasses." And down in verse 12 of chapter 2, Paul says, looking back at the time before they were Christians, says, "You remember this. You were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." That's the state of every unbeliever. That is part of the content of saving faith and it's no superficial matter. Truth is sometimes hard to listen to, isn't it? Because it's so weighty. But you tremble at the fact, you fear the fact, you're afraid of the fact that you're in your trespasses and sins, that you're separated from God, that that means that you're in a condition of wrath, and you start to realize, "I'm in trouble here. This is bad. I need forgiveness because God is offended by me, and I'm separated, and I have no hope, and I'm alone with no one to intercede for me before the wrath of a holy God." Do you know something about that kind of conviction and fear? Has something like that ever descended upon your soul? If not, you have reason to question whether you've ever understood the Gospel.

And look, don't let your pride get in the way. Don't let your pride get in the way and say, "Well, I've said for 10, 20, 30 years that I've understood this." Who cares about what your

pride was? Maybe you were wrong. The point is that you need to be right with God, and saving faith recognizes and trembles at the reality of the separating condition of the sinner. You tremble at that. You see, what's the word "salvation" mean? It's a state of being saved, right? Saved means that you were in danger. Have you ever seen yourself in danger or is this just part of a good act that you put on? You see, to the true Christian, the element of true saving faith, you say, "I'm saved," which is to say, "I was in great danger. I couldn't save myself." You see, we've used the lingo for so long that it's become commonplace to us. We've got to strip away the varnish of the commonplace and realize what these terms are saying. To be saved means there was danger, and no superficial danger. My eternal soul was in threat of sinking into the depths of hell with no opportunity to be released from it. I tell you, on a personal or public level, that's what I'm saying to you. My guilty, demented soul was in threat of eternal judgment from a righteous, holy God, and I deserved that and Christ saved me. That danger that I was in, hanging, as Edwards said, by the spider web thread, is over. I have been delivered safe to the shores of God's kingdom, but, oh, when I realized my danger, how I trembled and feared at it. Do you know something about that? Or have you never seen God? Have you just seen God as something other than a threat? If there's not some manner in which God is a threat, we don't have anything to be saved from, do we? Somehow, God's a threat to sinners, and they need to be saved. Why is He a threat? It's because of their guilt for which they are responsible, which separates them from God and puts them in the position of being a child of wrath. That's it. What must you do to be saved? You've got to take these things seriously. Take responsibility for your guilt and realize that separation from God is of momentous consequence.

Finally, content of saving faith. You take responsibility for your guilt. You tremble at your separation from God. Thirdly, you think on the Redeemer. You think on the Redeemer. Let's go back to Ephesians chapter 1. When your mind is properly informed about your guilt and the separation from God, then these words of Ephesians chapter 1 start to have greater significance to you. They're no longer words on a page. They're the fountain of water to a man dying of thirst. Chapter 1 verse 7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." Christ died to pay the price for sinners to be from sin, which is to say that Christ died to deliver us from this guilt that we've taken responsibility for. That somehow Christ died in order to take away the separation from God that this very passage speaks of. Somehow, this work of Christ is the only possible answer to my spiritual dilemma. And Paul has said, remember we're saying what does it mean that he says, "having also believed"? How was it they entered into salvation? Well, here's Christ right at the core of it. In Christ we have redemption through His blood. In Christ we have the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. You think on the Redeemer, and you realize, "This means I could never have saved myself. I couldn't be good enough. There was no religion that was going to save me. I couldn't do the right things." No, no, you step back. As it were, you look in the Scriptures and mentally you look back and you see that in the cross of Christ was your redemption, was your deliverance, was your salvation from this horrible guilt and separation that was there. That violent death was for me. And here's the thing. We used to sing this song here. "Not by the works of my hands, not by the things that my hands of done, can I be saved. Only in Christ." You realize that

salvation had to come outside of yourself. That you are saved by the righteousness of someone else. You are saved by the act of someone else. You can't save yourself. You are utterly dependent upon what someone else did for the well-being of your eternity.

Christ as your substitute. Look over to Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4. You see yourself on the receiving end of a great act of God that you could never have compelled Him to do. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4. Having just said that we're children of wrath, verse 4 says, "But God." Don't miss the contrast there. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ by grace." By undeserved favor, by kindness that you couldn't have even asked for, you have been saved. And so, for your salvation you've looked completely outside of yourself. You have not justified yourself. You have not asserted your own goodness comparative to someone else or otherwise. Saving faith understands that Christ died as a substitute for me. He died in our place. He acted on our behalf, because we cannot save ourselves. That blood 2,000 years ago was for the benefit of my soul, not for any guilt of His own. You see, in Christ, maybe this will help tie it all together: you see in Christ the only possible way that your guilt could be removed from your account, the only possible way that you could be reconciled to a holy God. Watch this: because you have trembled over the reality of your separation from God, the fear of the consequences of your sin and guilt are so great upon you that, watch this, the One who saved you from that threatened condition now is the One that you love more than anything or anyone else in the world. Because the value of what He did on your behalf at such great cost to Himself is so precious! I no longer have to be afraid! I no longer have that guilt on my account. That which crushed my conscience, that which frightened me, because of the just desserts that my sin deserved, someone interceded on my behalf and that someone was Christ. It was that Christ at the cross, and he gathered all of this up, and He took it on His shoulders and bore the stroke of God on Him, so that that stroke of God would not fall on me. And now, I am eternally secure because of Christ.

Think on the Redeemer. A lot of you have really good spouses in here. A lot of you have family that you love, and that's all really, really good and that's the way it should be but God forbid, that we would love a spouse, a sibling, a child, a fiancé more than we love the Christ who alone had the capacity and the willingness to deliver us from so great a peril as death. When you understand the realities of the Gospel, and you're truly saved, Christ is the most precious thing in all the universe, and there is nothing in second place, third place, fourth place, go all the way down to ten thousandth place. You love Christ so much, because He did what no one else could do, and He did it out of love and kindness that He wanted to display to you. He loved you enough to do that. He showed grace and kindness to you when He could've judged you. He said, "No, I'll do it. I'll take the punishment, so that you can go free. I want you to be a part of that redeemed humanity that is with me in heaven forever." And God orchestrated that, and planned that, and named you out for that before the foundation of the world. And as a result of that, you love Him supremely, and that's clear in your mind that there is no competition for the final affection of your soul. None. That's the content of saving faith. "I'm guilty. I tremble at that. I see in Christ the redemption that God has brought." That's what you understand.

That's what's in your mind. Guilt, separation, and a Savior, and still you're left with a question. What do you do with that? What do you do with that? That brings us to our second point this morning: the commitment of saving faith. The commitment of saving faith. Paul describes the response which receives this work of Christ, which appropriates it, which makes it your own. Look at verse 13 with me again. We've seen from the context both before and after what the content of the message of truth is, what the Gospel of salvation is, and Paul says, "Having also believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." We'll look at that work of the Holy Spirit next week. Here we just see that he's saying that you believed. There wasn't a ritual that you went through. No one could - watch this - no one could convey that upon you through the laying on of hands. No one could give that to you through the power of their lips. No man can tell you that your sins are forgiven. And those priests in various places throughout the centuries that have done that will face a particularly strict judgment from God. To arrogate to themselves the prerogative to forgive the sins of man like that. You realize that it can't be from what somebody can give to you, or someone can do for you. You have to receive it internally.

To believe, I'm going to give you different nuances of this word in what I'm about to say that you can find in all of the study helps. To believe is to be convinced. To believe is to be confident in. It means to trust. To be convinced about the content of the Gospel that we just described, "I am convinced that that is true, so much so that I will stake my eternal destiny on it." To put your confidence in Christ alone. You abandon any sense of ability of your own to save yourself or any contribution that you might make. It means to trust Christ alone to deliver you from your sin. It's more than mentally accepting certain factual statements. Watch this: to believe in Christ means that you turn to Him with your whole heart, with your whole man. You deny yourself and you submit to His authority and saving purpose in your life. To put your faith in Christ means that you receive Him. You welcome Him, and, watch this, and you rest in Him. You receive Him, and you rest in Him. You stop trying to do anything else to earn your salvation. You're mindful of the fact that you cannot contribute to the perfect righteousness of Christ. You can't make His work any better. You can't improve on it with anything you do. And so, you rest on Him alone, and your final trust is in Him.

To state it on the negative side. You stop your rebellion. You stop thinking that you're a good enough person on your own. You're not. You reject that a church can help you. You reject that being born into a Christian family can help you. You reject that your pastor can help you. You abandon any hope or confidence in yourself or any human means to assist you. You reject the foolish thought that Mary can help you. You abandon everything and trust in Christ alone. You hand yourself to Christ with your whole inner man, and you do not, watch this, you do not retain the option of turning back. Jesus said, "Anyone who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God." There is an irrevocable severing with your past self and life and saying, "Christ, it's you. You alone. I'm not holding anything back. I have no second options. You can save me and You will, and I trust You to do so. But if You were to somehow refuse me, there would be nowhere else for me to turn." You reorient your entire life to follow Him. That's what you must do if you want to be saved.

Let's bring it back to a theological way to express it. What we've seen here today is this: the sovereignty of God renders the sinner helpless to save himself. However, it does not make the sinner inactive. You don't just ignore it and say, "Well, I'm just going to wait for God to save me." No, you stir up your heart to go after Him. You must rely on Christ. If you're confused, don't sit back in indifference and say, "Well, it must not really matter." It matters. If you're confused, you cry out to God for mercy, "Help me understand! I'm so confused, and that preacher goes on forever. God, help me understand! By the power of Your Spirit open my mind. You've got to do something to help me, because I just don't get it." You cry out like that. You sit down, and you open your Bible and read it. You can't say, "I'm concerned about my soul," and leave your Bible unopened. This is where God meets us. This is where God makes Himself known. Don't be waiting for some big dream or something to come to you. You stir up. You've got hands. You've got eyes that can see, most of you. I say that gently. If you've got a Bible and you can open it and you can read it, then that's what you should do if you're confused. If you don't care enough to do that, then don't blame God that you are not saved.

What you do you? You pay attention to preaching that shows you the way of life. That's what you do. Martyn Lloyd Jones put it this way, and I quote, answering the question, what must we do? And I quote without his Welsh accent, "We must not only hear this Word, we must believe it. The man who truly believes has come to see himself as a sinner. He has come to see the Law of God condemning him. He has some conception now of the holiness of God. He realizes that he has to stand before God in the judgment, so he is concerned. He is alarmed at his whole position. What can he do? He hears this message about Christ dying for his sins, and he says, 'that is the very thing I need. I want it. I believe it, although I do not understand it fully.' So, having heard, he believes, and he realizes that it is his duty to believe, because all are called upon to repent and believe." What must you do to be saved? That's it.

Jesus put it this way. Turn to Luke chapter 9. Luke chapter 9. What must I do to be saved? Jesus answered that question too. Luke chapter 9 verse 23, where Jesus said, He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Beloved, let me just wrap it up just like this. You see, Jesus says, "You lose your life for my sake." You lose your life for Christ. You exchange your life for this salvation. He says, "If you want to enter in, say this little prayer. 1, 2, 3, and you're done." No! No! No! No, I'm frightened by the impact that I know that that kind of thinking has had on the world of so-called Christianity and how it still influences some of you. That is not it! If it was a little simple prayer that you could recite in ten seconds beside your bed when you were three years old, Christ would have said so right there. No, He addresses it to thinking, conscious, thoughtful beings. "If you want to have me, lose your life for my sake. Pick up your cross, that instrument of death. Deny yourself. Reject yourself, and come follow me." Not a little tiny prayer that leaves you unchanged with no intention of reorienting your life. If you want to be saved, what you must do is you must come to Christ with the intention of

turning it over to Him, of giving your life to Him, saying, "Lord, save me. I now belong to You, not to me. I belong to You to follow You." And for those of us who have been saved, isn't that the sweetest thing that we're able to say about our existence? "I belong to Christ." Isn't it sweet for you who are Christians to know, to love this Christ who gave His life for you, to realize that He did that for you? Isn't it the consuming affection of your soul that, "Oh, just to belong to Him. That's the greatest privilege in life. I love Him so much," you say to yourself. "I'm so glad for the cross. I so worship Jesus. I belong to Him. I belong to Him though my guilt should've forbidden it. He fulfilled justice, so that I could be saved and belong to Him. And oh, how I love Him so very much." What must you do to be saved? Turn truly to Christ. Believe in Him for salvation.

Let's pray together.

Father, ultimately, once again, we come back to rely on Your Spirit to take these things and to apply them to our hearts, to help us. Father, for the true Christians that are in this room, I pray that everything that was said here would just be sweet and affirming of their assurance of salvation. That they've seen out of Your Word an echo of their own spiritual experience. That their spiritual life is consistent with the principles of Your Word, and it's a mark that their salvation is real. That You have saved them, and that You will never let them go. And Father, may those of us in that position rise up and go forth with joy, with a song filling our heart. "Jesus saves. Jesus saves, and He saved me. Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

Father, for those whose hearts have been hard, perhaps who have never heard and understood, God, I pray that You would have a like mercy on them that You had on me. That You would enlighten their darkened mind. That You would awaken their slumbering thoughts. That You would influence their stubborn will, and so turn them and their orientation in their darkened mind. Father, may the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit work upon them to bring them to a true saving faith in Christ. If someone's here that's been living in a false assurance, Father, puncture it. Deflate it. And teach them and lead them, so that they would cast themselves upon Christ alone. Seeing their guilt, trembling in fear at You, and, yet, turning to that Redeemer, whom You have made so plain and evident in the Scriptures. We hand these things to You. In the name of Christ Jesus our Savior we pray. Amen.

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